



# Zion Baptist Chapel Calne Wiltshire

## Archaeological Evaluation Report



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## SUMMARY

*In November 2008 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation comprising six test pits within the land previously used as a burial ground for Zion Baptist Chapel, Calne, Wiltshire (NGR 399713 171209). The work was carried out on behalf of North Wiltshire District Council, in respect of redevelopment of the burial ground into a market square. The evaluation revealed a number of post-medieval features, including six earth-cut graves, two brick shaft graves and two stone-lined shaft graves. A dry-stone culvert, part of the original north churchyard boundary wall and three possible refuse pits were also revealed.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In November 2008 OA carried out a field evaluation at Zion Baptist chapel burial ground, Calne, Wiltshire, on behalf of North Wiltshire District Council. The work was carried out in respect of a proposal to redevelop the Zion Baptist burial ground into a market square. The works form part of a scheme of refurbishment and partial re-development at Phelps Parade, a shopping mall that lies adjacent to the burial ground.
- 1.1.2 An archaeological method statement detailing the work to be completed was prepared by OA (OA 2008a).
- 1.1.3 The proposed development site is situated at NGR 399713 171209 and is approximately 325m sq in area.

### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies at approximately 73.93m above OD, and is situated on Coral Rag (British Geological Survey Sheet 266), a coral and oolitic limestone.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 No formal desk based research or any other archaeological investigation on the Zion Chapel burial ground have been carried out to date. Prior to the commencement of the archaeological evaluation the following documentary resources were consulted: a transcribed list of names and dates of burials within the burial ground, taken from a schedule of burials (compiled on January 21st 1845) by D Faulkner; a 19th century plan of the burial ground and copies taken from a burials registers book (*'Book of Burials'*) belonging to the Chapel.
- 1.3.2 The plan of the burial ground shows the location of nineteen burial plots (all 19th century), at a scale of an eighth of an inch to one foot. A more precise date of this plan is not known. The list of burials and register of burials give the names of individuals buried within each of these plots, including the dates of the interments.

They suggest that 63 individuals were buried in the churchyard from 1835 and that plots contained between 0 and 11 interments. The last recorded burial dates to 1874.

### ***Background to post-medieval burial practices***

- 1.3.3 Although post-medieval burial archaeology is a relatively recent field, excavation and crypt clearances over the past 20 years have revealed certain common trends in burial practices, which make it possible to predict (at least to some extent) the probable nature of the burial archaeology at Zion Chapel. The following section summarises the general nature of late Georgian/Victorian practices that may have found expression in the churchyard, and may be helpful in predicting the probable burial archaeology within the Zion Chapel burial ground.

#### *Status*

- 1.3.4 During the 18th and early 19th centuries, it was regarded as paramount to one's social standing and very respectability to give the dead as good a 'send off' as one could possibly afford. In the highly stratified society of this period, the socio-economic status of the deceased and their family was thus reflected in the funeral procession, which in most Christian denominations, amongst the more affluent, involved black plumed horses, an elaborate hearse, mutes and chief mourners, an elaborate coffin and memorial and other outward shows of mourning, including mourning dress and highly prescribed mourning behaviour of the survivors (Litten 1991). Non-conformist sects, including Baptists, differed in their ideology, however. They placed more theological emphasis on eschewing worldly values and possessions in pursuit of more spiritual goals. This was also in keeping with the largely working class character of the Baptists of this period (Boston, forthcoming forthcoming).

#### *Types of graves*

- 1.3.5 Earth-cut graves were by far the most common extra-mural grave type in the post-medieval period. In the 18th- and 19th-centuries, however, concern over disturbance of the remains of family members (either through grave robbing or by later burials), and the increasing use of death ritual for social display led to the establishment of subterranean brick-built family vaults and shaft graves for the interment of multiple burials. A vault traditionally has a vaulted roof, the entrance to the interior commonly being through a doorway in one of the sidewalls (often with a set of steps leading down to it). A brick shaft grave is essentially a rectangular or single-break (meaning that the line of the coffin 'breaks' at the shoulder, from where it tapers in a straight line towards the foot end) grave cut lined with a single or double layer of bricks and mortar. Brick shaft graves may be of single or double width. The top of the grave is covered by horizontal ledger stones (often sandstone or limestone slabs), which may be removed for subsequent interments. Coffins were stacked vertically one above the other within the grave, sometimes resting on horizontal metal bars (racks). As the coffins decomposed they would fall through the bars to the bottom of the shaft grave, thus leaving the rack available for the next interment. In cases where the coffin had not decomposed, for example with lead or metal lined/plated coffins, or when only a short amount of time had elapsed between burials, subsequent interments would

simply be stacked on top, often leaving a large void beneath the racking. Vault and brick shaft graves were originally surmounted by above-ground memorials (including ledgers).

- 1.3.6 Brick shaft graves generally range from 1 m to 2.5 m in depth, and are usually wide enough to accommodate an adult coffin, occasionally two abreast. The bricks and mortar construction of the graves is often of poor quality, and liable to collapse.

#### *Post-medieval coffins*

- 1.3.7 Coffined burials became increasingly popular in the post-medieval period, with the plain rectangular and trapezoid wooden boxes of earlier coffins gradually being replaced by, in most Christian denominations, elaborately decorated and upholstered single-break varieties (Litten 1991).

- 1.3.8 As with other aspects of funerary ritual in this period, the socio-economic status of the deceased and their family was reflected in the elaboration of the coffin. The poorest comprised a single thickness wooden case decorated with few fittings (usually just iron grips), whilst coffins of the middle and upper classes comprised a double thickness of wood; an outer wooden case and inner lead shell; a lead shell and inner wooden coffin; or a triple layer of a wood-metal-wood (most commonly lead). The upholstered exterior was decorated with elaborate studwork and punched metal plates: escutcheons, lid motifs and *departum* plates (breastplates, footplates and headplates), which were inscribed with the name of the deceased, their age and date of death and other biographical information.

- 1.3.9 Investment in funerary panoply reached its zenith in the 1840s. After this period public sentiment changed, and excessive funerary displays increasingly began to be regarded as vulgar, ostentatious and in poor taste (Litten 1991). A trend towards more simple funerals began, one which continues today.

#### *Depth of burial*

- 1.3.10 Depth of burial varied considerably within the post-medieval period, and hence, may not be predicted with confidence. The 'six foot deep' rule introduced amidst fears of contagion engendered by overcrowding of urban churchyards and epidemics, in practice was only sporadically carried out. This is particularly true of family plots containing multiple interments stacked one above the other.

- 1.3.11 Excavations within other churchyards have revealed post-medieval burials at very variable depths. For example, St Nicholas's Church, Chadlington, Oxon., skeletons were located between 0.44 m - 0.66 m below the present ground surface (OA 2008b); whilst at St Mary's Church, Longworth, Oxon., they were between 0.8 m - 1.5 m deep (OA 2007a). At St Nicholas's Church, Forest Hill, Oxon., however, the elaborate coffins of a prominent doctor/ poet and his wife lay just beneath the current turfline (approximately 0.2m and 0.3 m deep). The latter coffin was of triple wood-lead-wood construction (OA 2007b).

1.3.12 Thus, the depth of post-medieval burials is very unpredictable, and, no assumption about burial depth at Zion Chapel should be made.

## 1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 The project was managed by Louise Loe, head of Heritage Burial Services, Oxford Archaeology. Fieldwork was undertaken by Mike Simms and Helen Webb. The report was compiled by Helen Webb, with input from Lucy Martin and Markus Dylewski on the graphics.

1.4.2 We are indebted to North Wiltshire District Council who commissioned this work.

## 2 EVALUATION AIMS

2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were:

- To explore the number, character, location and depth of burials, and to record biographical information from coffin plates, if possible;
- To aid the design of the market square by showing the ground conditions;
- To make available the results of the investigation by providing an illustrated report and ordered archive

## 3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Scope of fieldwork

3.1.1 Six burial plots, numbers 18, 14, 12, 9, 7 and 3 (Figure 2) were selected for investigation in consultation with D Faulkner. A test pit, approximately 1.5m squared and up to 1m deep, was excavated into each of these. Test pits were located by superimposing the 19th century burial plan over a modern plan of the burial ground (Figure 2). Each test pit was assigned the burial plot number with which it was associated.

### 3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

3.2.1 All excavation was undertaken by hand. After stripping of the turf and topsoil, each test pit was excavated to the level of recognisable archaeological features. Where earth-cut features, including graves, were identified, the fill of these was excavated to a maximum depth of 1m, or to the top of the highest burial, whichever was encountered first.

3.2.2 Structural features, where revealed, were cleaned and recorded, but not removed/dismantled. Where shaft graves were revealed, only ledger/capping stones that were broken or loose, and could easily be moved, were lifted to allow inspection of the grave. Any such structural components that were moved, were replaced prior to backfilling of the test pit. Any coffins or coffin fittings encountered were recorded but left *in situ*.

- 3.2.3 Each test pit was backfilled using the excavated soil, and all turf and topsoil was reinstated at the end of excavation.
- 3.2.4 A plan of each test pit, showing the archaeological features revealed, was drawn at a scale of 1:20. Relevant sections of each test pit were also drawn at a scale of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A digital photographic record was also made. All excavation and recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (Wilkinson 1992).
- 3.2.5 Coffin fittings were sketched and/or photographed where possible. Those that had design details that could be identified were compared to those in the Christ Church, Spitalfields and OA catalogues of coffin fittings. Where they did not match a type previously recorded, they were assigned new type codes with the prefix 'CAZION'.

### 3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 No disarticulated human bone was encountered during the excavation. Coffin fittings were kept with their associated burials and only moved when necessary. If removed, they were re-interred within the graves from which they were excavated.
- 3.3.2 Any pottery, ceramic building material (CBM), glass, clay tobacco pipe (CTP), animal bone, shell and iron objects were noted, but not retained.

### 3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.4.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the evaluation.

### 3.5 Presentation of results

- 3.5.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below. Each of the test pits, and the deposits and features encountered within them, are discussed in turn. An inventory of all deposits and features recorded can be found in Appendix 1.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Description of deposits

#### *Test pit 18 (Figure 3; Plate 1)*

- 4.1.1 The natural (11), a yellow-brown silt-clay, with very small, sub-rounded limestone fragments, was encountered within this test pit at approximately 0.6m below ground level. Very little of this natural was seen here due to the presence of a number of intercutting features. It should be highlighted here that due to the intercutting of features within this test pit, and the often similar composition of the fills, it was difficult to define the cut features during excavation. The test pit was therefore dug to a depth of 1m below ground level, and the features recorded in section and plan, at this level. It should also be noted that at around 1m below ground level, the ground became increasingly wet, indicating the approximate level of the water table.

- 4.1.2 The earliest features (10), which cut through the natural, had steep, almost vertical sides. It was found in the south-west corner of the test pit. Only the north-east corner of this probable square or rectangular feature was revealed, but its steep sides and shape indicated that it was probably a grave cut, possibly of double width, given that it measured 0.7m, approximately N-S, and was not fully revealed. Two fills were observed within grave cut 10. The lower fill (09) (at least 0.2m thick) was a friable, grey-brown clay-silt, with occasional small limestone fragments. The upper fill (08) (0.6m in thick), was a lighter grey-brown clay silt, with charcoal flecks and more frequent stone inclusions. This fill contained fragments of post-medieval pot.
- 4.1.3 The eastern edge of grave 10 was truncated by a cut (14) for a pit, visible in section only (Figure 3, section 3). The pit was fairly flat bottomed, with a side slope of approximately 50-55 degrees. Two fills were identified; the earlier fill (13), a light grey-brown clay-silt, with charcoal and small limestone fragments (0.35m thick), and the later fill (12), a darker grey-brown clay-silt with charcoal flecks (0.3m thick). Both fills contained fragments of post-medieval pot and animal bone. The function of the pit was unclear, but it may have served as refuse pit.
- 4.1.4 The northern edge of grave 10 was truncated by another, steep, almost vertically, sided grave cut (07), aligned WSW - ENE. This grave also had two fills. The lower fill (06) was a friable grey-brown clay-silt with charcoal flecks (at least 0.3m thick), and the upper fill (05), was a darker grey-brown clay-silt, with charcoal and lime mortar flecks (0.5m thick). Both fills contained post-medieval pottery. Only 0.25m width of this grave was visible, as it was truncated on its northern side by another identically aligned grave (04).
- 4.1.5 Grave cut 04, also fairly vertically sided, was located along the northern edge of the test pit, with a width of at least 0.45m. The lower fill (03) of this grave comprised a light grey-brown clay-silt with charcoal and mortar flecks (at least 0.4m thick). The upper fill (02) was a slightly darker grey-brown clay-silt, with charcoal flecks (0.4m thick). Fill 02 contained post-medieval pot fragments.
- 4.1.6 Overlying all of the grave cuts was a 0.2m thick layer of topsoil and turf (01). Within the topsoil, at approximately 0.1-0.15m below the ground level, two *in situ* kerb stones, on a NNW-SSE alignment, were revealed, close to the eastern edge of the test pit. It is likely that these were the partial remains of the above ground grave memorial for one or more of the grave cuts identified within the test pit. The kerb stones themselves, constructed of limestone, were approximately 0.35m in length, 0.14m in width and 0.2m in height, with bevelled top edges.
- 4.1.7 At 1m below ground level, no burials had been reached. A depth of 0.8m of each of the three grave cuts was revealed.

***Test pit 14 (Figure 4; Plate 2)***

- 4.1.8 The natural was not observed within this test pit. The earliest deposit encountered (24) was a light grey-brown clay-silt, with frequent abraded limestone fragments. A thickness of at least 0.8m was observed. It is suggested that this deposit, containing

post-medieval pottery, CBM, animal bone, oyster shell and corroded iron nails, was a layer of worked, possibly garden soil.

- 4.1.9 Layer 24 was cut by a fairly steep-sided pit (20), on the eastern side of the test pit. The shape of pit 20 was not ascertained because only part of its western edge was visible in plan. It was found to be fairly flat-bottomed (Figure 4, section 21), with a maximum depth of 0.7m. The single fill of the pit was a dark grey-brown clay-silt, with very occasional small limestone fragments (21). Animal bone, post-medieval pot and CBM were recovered from this fill. It is possible that this feature represents a refuse pit.
- 4.1.10 In the south-east corner of the test pit, and truncating the southern side of pit 20, was another pit (22). Again, it was difficult to ascertain its shape in plan, as it was only partially revealed within the test pit, but it was possibly sub-oval or sub-rectangular. The sides sloped at approximately 50-55 degrees, with a gradual break of slope at the base, which itself was fairly flat (Figure 4, sections 21 and 22). The fill (23), was a slightly more reddish brown than 21, with occasional limestone fragments and very occasional charcoal flecks. Aside from a fragment of possible Tudor green glazed pot, this fill contained a fairly substantial amount of post-medieval pot, including blue and white china, CBM, animal bone, bottle glass, CTP and iron nails, as well as an iron fitting used to reinforce the heel of a shoe, known as a 'heel shoe'. The presence and quantity of these finds is convincing evidence that this was a refuse pit.
- 4.1.11 Overlying the two pits and the worked soil layer through which they were cut, was the 0.2m thick topsoil and turf.

#### ***Test pit 12 (Figure 5; Plate 3)***

- 4.1.12 The natural silt-clay with very small stone fragments (48), was reached at a depth of 0.75m below ground level. It was slightly greyer in colour than in the test pit within plot 18. Overlying the natural was a 0.18m thick layer of light grey-brown silt-clay with very small stone fragments and charcoal flecks (47). Post-medieval pot fragments were recovered from this layer. Overlying layer 47 was a slightly darker grey-brown clay-silt layer (46), approximately 0.2m thick. This also contained post-medieval pot fragments, as well as CBM and CTP. It is thought that layers 46 and 47 represent deposits of earlier worked/garden soil.
- 4.1.13 Cut through layer 46, in the southern half of the test pit, was the construction cut (45) for a NE-SW orientated stone culvert (44). The culvert comprised sides of limestone blocks and limestone capping slabs, and had been constructed without mortar. Its overall width was approximately 0.6m, with a height of around 0.3m. A total length of 1.84m was revealed within the test pit. The capping slabs lay at 0.57m below ground level. Removal of one of the capping slabs found the culvert to be entirely blocked/silted up. It is suggested that the culvert may have served as a drainage channel for one or more of the properties, possibly workshops, that would have lined the high street frontage to the west of the site in the post-medieval period. The backfill (43) of the construction cut for the culvert was a friable dark grey-brown

clay-silt loam with charcoal flecks. This also contained post-medieval pot and CBM fragments.

- 4.1.14 Overlying the culvert was a further layer identified as worked, or garden, soil (42), a grey-brown clay-silt, with small stone fragments and charcoal flecks, approximately 0.22m thick. Post-medieval pot and CBM fragments were also recovered from this layer. Cut through layer 42, running roughly E-W along the very northern edge of the test pit, was the construction cut (51) for wall 49. The wall itself was constructed of roughly dressed limestone blocks, up to 0.25m by 0.18m by 0.12m in size. These were bonded with a lime mortar. The extent of wall revealed in the test pit was 1.5m long, 0.13m wide and 0.6m high. The top of the remaining wall was 0.18m below ground level. The backfill (50) of the construction cut (51) comprised a friable dark grey-brown silt-loam with charcoal flecks. Fragments of CTP were recovered from this deposit. It is thought that the wall revealed was part of the original 19th century churchyard boundary wall. The location of the wall corresponds closely with the western part of the 19th century north boundary wall shown in Figure 2.
- 4.1.15 Overlying the wall, was a layer of light grey silt-clay with frequent crushed and fragmented limestone inclusions (41). This layer had a maximum depth of 0.18m, in the south-eastern corner of the test pit, petering out in the western part of the test pit. It suggested that this deposit may have represented a ground surface layer, post dating the disuse of the wall (49). Overlying layer 41 was a 0.2m thick layer of topsoil and turf (40). Just below this, running along the northern edge of the test pit, a metal water pipe was encountered.

#### ***Test pit 9 (Figure 6; Plates 4, 5 and 6)***

- 4.1.16 The earliest deposit revealed within this test pit was layer 62, a light grey-brown clay-silt with abraded limestone fragments and charcoal flecks, and probably a layer of worked/garden soil. A maximum of 0.4m thickness was revealed within the test pit. Post-medieval pot and CBM were recovered.
- 4.1.17 In the north-east corner of the test pit, a construction cut (69) for a W-E orientated brick shaft grave (68) was cut through layer 62. Only the very south-west corner of the shaft grave was revealed within the trench (Plate 4). The shaft grave comprised a single skin of bricks, bonded with lime mortar, and capped with limestone slabs. The top of the slabs lay at 0.4m below ground level and the upper course of bricks lay at 0.5m below ground level. Removal of one of the upper bricks allowed a somewhat restricted view into the shaft grave itself (Plate 5). It was observed to be single-break in shape and had an internal width of 0.8m, and depth of 1.4m. The base lay at around 1.9m below ground level. At least two skeletons were observed, probably both adult, at the base of the grave. At least one of the skeletons was laid supine (on the back) with the arms straight, by the sides of the body, orientated with the head in the west end and the feet in the east end. This orientation is the accepted tradition for Christian burial (McKinley 2008, 21). The fairly well preserved remains of a coffin associated with this individual, and possibly of wood-metal-wood construction, were also visible, including an iron grip at the head end of the coffin, an iron breast plate and

possible lid motif. Whilst details of patterning on these coffin fittings could not be ascertained, the complete outline of the breast plate was observable. It was not comparable to any of the types from the Christ Church, Spitalfields, or OA catalogues, and was thus assigned new type code CAZION 01 (Figure 9; Plate 5). Water was visible at bottom of the shaft grave. The backfill (70) of the construction cut for the shaft grave comprised a light grey-brown silt-clay with frequent charcoal and mortar flecks.

- 4.1.18 Overlying layer 62 and shaft grave 68 was a dark yellow-brown clay-silt layer with charcoal flecks, up to 0.2m thick (61). This was interpreted as a layer of general churchyard soil, from which post-medieval pot fragments were also recovered. In the south-western part of the test pit, the eastern end of another limestone capped, brick shaft grave (64) was revealed, the construction cut (67) for which was cut through layer 61. The capping slabs lay at approximately 0.3m below ground level, with the top course of bricks at 0.36m below ground level. As with earlier shaft grave 68, 64 comprised a single skin of bricks, bonded with a lime mortar. The dimensions of shaft grave 64 were 0.8m wide by 0.68m long (as revealed in the test pit). The capping slab running into the western section of the test pit had been broken, with the two main fragments tilting into the grave slightly. Other fairly large limestone fragments, possibly fragments of broken capping slabs from the western half of the grave (not revealed within the test pit), were also visible within the backfill (63) that had been deposited after the placement of the capping slabs.
- 4.1.19 Removal of the end (eastern) capping slab allowed inspection into the shaft grave. A well preserved wooden coffin (66), covered on all visible sides with thin tin plating, was revealed almost at the very top of the shaft grave, at 0.56m below ground level (Plate 6). There was no evidence for coffin fittings (for example, breast plate, lid motif, upholstery studs, grips or grip plates). It appeared that the coffin was orientated on its side, the reason for which was unclear. The end of the coffin - presumably the foot end if it was lying in the same, W-E orientation as the burials within grave 68 - measured 0.3m in height and 0.45m in width. These dimensions suggest that it would have fitted easily within the shaft grave had it been placed in, in the conventional way. Of course, the dimensions and shape of the western ends of the shaft grave and coffin were not revealed, and may hold information on the unusual orientation of the coffin. Underlying coffin 66 was a friable, dark grey-brown clay-silt deposit (65). The full depth of the shaft grave could not be measured due to the presence of this deposit. It was not clear whether 65 was an intentional backfill, possibly covering earlier burials, or whether it was the result of in-filling of surrounding soil either when the final coffin (66) was interred, or when the capping slabs were damaged. Of course, these events may have been synonymous. Overlying the latest backfill (63) was the 0.2m thick layer of topsoil and turf (60), seen across the site.

#### ***Test pit 7 (Figure 7; Plate 7)***

- 4.1.20 The earliest deposit within this test pit was a layer of fairly compact, grey-brown clay-silt with frequent limestone and occasional charcoal inclusions. The total excavated depth of this feature was 0.6m. Post-medieval pot, CBM, CTP, glass and

animal bone were recovered from this layer, interpreted as a worked/garden soil layer. Three W-E aligned earth-cut graves were cut through this layer. Grave cut 83 was located along the southern edge of the test pit. Only the northern edge and part of the foot end of the grave were revealed. The sides of the cut were almost vertical, with the shape in plan probably rectangular or single-break. A 1.18m length, 0.22m width and 0.68m depth of the grave cut was revealed. Against the southern section of the test pit, the very northern edge of a well preserved coffin was revealed, at 0.86m below ground level. A length of 1.1m was visible. Although the amount revealed was very limited, the structure of the coffin was found to comprise an outer layer of wood, a middle layer of thin sheet metal - probably zinc - and an inner layer of wood. Three iron fixing nails were recovered, but no coffin fittings (for example, grips, grip plates, upholstery studs) were revealed. The backfill of grave 84 comprised a grey-brown clay-silt with frequent limestone and mortar inclusions.

- 4.1.21 Another grave (85) was revealed, running into the centre of the western baulk of the test pit. Only the foot end of the grave was revealed - a width of 0.52m and a length of 0.5m. A maximum depth of 0.8m was excavated in this grave. Its shape in plan was probably either rectangular or single-break. At 1m below ground level a coffin was revealed. Fragments of degraded wood were visible, as well as two corroded iron grips, grip plate fragments, and an unidentified strip of corroded iron. The small size of the grips indicated that the coffin had probably been that of a child. The fill of the grave (86), comprised a dark grey-brown clay-silt with occasional limestone fragments. A few fragments of animal bone were observed in this fill.
- 4.1.22 The southern edge and part of the foot end of a third grave (87) were revealed along the northern edge of the test pit. Probably rectangular or single-break in plan, the extent of the grave revealed was 1.24m long by 0.23m wide and 0.8m deep were. Having excavated the grave fill to 1m below ground level, no burial was reached. The fill (88) comprised a relatively loose, grey-brown silt-clay with fairly frequent limestone fragments and occasional charcoal flecks.
- 4.1.23 Overlying all of the graves was a 0.1-0.12m thick band of dark yellow-brown clay silt (81), interpreted as a layer of churchyard soil. This was overlain by the topsoil and turf (80).

### ***Test pit 3 (Figure 8; Plate 8)***

- 4.1.24 Within test pit 3, the earliest deposit encountered was worked/garden soil layer 108, a light grey-brown silt-clay with frequent limestone inclusions. Cut through this layer was the construction cut (107) for W-E aligned stone-lined shaft grave 106. Part of the southern edge of the shaft grave was revealed within the northern half of the test pit. A 1.5m length and 0.42m width of the grave were revealed, but removal of one of the limestone blocks from the upper course of stones enabled the full internal width, just past the shoulder level of the single-break shaped structure, to be ascertained - approximately 0.55m. The structure itself comprised walls of limestone blocks, and large limestone capping slabs, which lay 0.38m below ground level. The capping slabs, as seen with brick shaft graves 64 and 68, were not hewn. The limestone walls

however, were extremely well finished on the internal surfaces. The external surfaces were rough and unfinished. The depth of the shaft grave was around 1.8m, with the base at approximately 2.28m below ground level.

4.1.25 Despite the restricted view into the shaft grave a well preserved, child's coffin (wooden) could be seen. The coffin appeared to be standing on its end, with one end - presumably the head end of the coffin - facing upwards, 1.15m below ground level. Rather than having been placed deliberately in this way, which seems unlikely, it is suggested that the coffin had been resting on a metal rack (see Section 1.3.7), as has been observed in many other shaft graves (including shaft grave 102 discussed below, Section 4.1.25), and, either due to corrosion of the iron bars, decomposition of the coffin, or even an accident during interment, the foot end of the coffin had slipped away from the bar, thus tipping the coffin upright. No such iron bars were actually observed in this grave, although the view into the shaft grave was extremely limited. The position of the coffin allowed an iron grip and grip plate to be observed in detail. Neither matched any of the types seen at other sites, thus they were assigned new type codes: Grip CAZION 01 and Grip plate CAZION 01 (Figure 10). Water was observed at the base of the shaft grave. The backfill (105) of the construction cut (107) comprised a light grey-brown clay-silt with charcoal and lime mortar flecks.

4.1.26 Overlying shaft grave 106 was a layer of dark yellow-brown clay-silt churchyard soil that was up to 0.2m thick. This was cut by the construction cut (103) for W-E aligned shaft grave 102. This was also a stone-lined shaft grave, partially revealed in the southern half of the test pit. A length of 1.5m and width of 0.6m were revealed. Similar to shaft grave 106, 102 comprised large limestone capping slabs (0.32m below ground level), overlying walls of limestone blocks, the internal surfaces of which, visible after the removal of one of the upper coarse blocks, were extremely well finished. The single-break shaped structure was found to have at least two horizontal iron bars built into the walls, at 0.85m below ground level. As stated above, such bars, were used as a rack to rest coffins upon. Human bone and remains of coffin/s were visible at the bottom of the shaft grave, which was 1.4m deep, or approximately 1.8m below ground level. The base of the grave was partially filled by water. The backfill (101) of the construction cut (103) comprised a grey-brown clay-silt with charcoal and lime mortar flecks. Overlying the backfill (101) was the topsoil and turf (100).

## 4.2 Finds

4.2.1 All finds of pottery, CBM, CTP, animal bone, glass and iron were consistent with a post-medieval date. All coffins and coffin fittings observed were consistent with a later post-medieval date, corresponding with the use of the area as a burial ground for Zion Baptist Chapel at this time (1836-1878).

## 5 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

### 5.1 Summary of results

5.1.1 The excavation of six test pits within the burial ground associated with Zion Baptist Chapel revealed a number of post-medieval archaeological features. Table 1 gives a summary of the features observed and the depths below ground level of the structures and burials that were revealed.

5.1.2 A number of the archaeological features that were revealed were cut through layers of earlier worked/garden soils. Single worked/garden soil layers were revealed in test pits 14, 9, 7 and 3 (context numbers 24, 62, 82 and 108 respectively), and may all represent the same layer. No worked soil layer was revealed in test pit 18, probably due to intercutting of the numerous features that were found there. In the three test pits on the southern side of the churchyard (9, 7 and 3), the worked soil layer was overlain by a layer of later, churchyard soil (context numbers 61, 81 and 104 respectively). No such layer was observed in any of the three northern test pits. Test pit 12 revealed three distinct layers of worked/garden soil (47, 46 and 42), in contrast to the single layers that were observed in the other test pits, as well as a possible previous ground surface layer (41) post-dating the disuse of the original church boundary wall.

Table 1: Summary of archaeological features and their depths below ground level

Test pit	Feature	Context cut through by feature	Depth
18	Earth-cut grave 04	Truncates grave 07	No burials revealed at maximum excavation depth of 1m below GL
	Earth-cut grave 07	Truncates grave 10	
	Earth-cut grave 10	Cuts natural 11, may have originally been cut through a layer of worked/garden soil, not now visible due to intercutting features	
	Possible refuse pit 14	Truncates grave 10	Base at 0.8m below GL
14	Refuse pit 20	Cuts worked/garden soil layer 24	Base at 0.86m below GL
	Refuse pit 22	Truncates pit 20	Base at 0.83 below GL
12	Stone culvert 44	Cuts worked/garden soil layer 46	0.57m below GL
	Original churchyard boundary wall 49	Cuts worked/garden soil layer 42	0.18m below GL
9	Brick shaft grave 68	Cuts worked/garden soil layer 62	Capping slabs at 0.4m below GL; skeletons and remains of coffins present at c. 1.4m below GL; base of grave c.1.9m below GL
	Brick shaft grave 64	Cuts churchyard soil 61	Capping slabs at c.0.3m below GL; tin-plated wooden coffin present at 0.56m below GL; base of grave not visible
7	Earth-cut grave 83	Cuts worked/garden soil layer 82	Coffin present at 0.86m below GL
	Earth-cut grave 85	Cuts worked/garden soil layer 82	Coffin present at 1m below GL
	Earth-cut grave 87	Cuts worked/garden soil layer 82	No burial revealed by 1m below GL
3	Stone-lined shaft grave 106	Cuts worked/garden soil layer 108	Capping slabs at 0.38m below GL; upended coffin at 1.15m below GL; base of grave c.2.28m below GL

	Stone-lined shaft grave 102	Cuts churchyard soil 104	Capping slabs at 0.32m below GL; skeletons and remains of coffin visible at bottom of grave - base of grave c.1.8m below GL
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GL = ground level

## 5.2 Discussion

### *The burials*

- 5.2.1 A total of six earth-cut graves, two brick shaft graves and two stone-lined shaft graves were revealed during the excavation.
- 5.2.2 Plot 18 is recorded in the schedule of burials as containing ten individuals. Three earth-cut graves were revealed within test pit 18. No burials were reached. Whether each of these grave cuts contained more than one individual could not be ascertained, but it is possible that other graves lay outside the area of the test pit.
- 5.2.3 A total of seven individuals are recorded in the schedule for plot 14. No grave cuts were revealed within the test pit. It is therefore likely that they lay elsewhere within the plot.
- 5.2.4 Plot 12 is listed in the schedule as having no burials. This is consistent with the findings of the evaluation.
- 5.2.5 Five burials are listed in the schedule for Plot 9. Two brick shaft graves were revealed within the test pit. Shaft grave 68 contained at least two individuals, and one coffin was revealed. It was unclear whether more burials were contained within shaft grave 68. Coffin 66 survives at such a high level within the shaft, that it suggests the shaft was perhaps full with additional burials. On the other hand, it may have been that the coffin was resting upon a metal rack (not observed), and had not fallen through to the base of the grave because the tin plating on the coffin had prevented it from doing so.
- 5.2.6 It should be highlighted that only the very south-western corner of shaft grave 68 was revealed, within the very north-eastern corner of test pit 9. The location of the test pit, according to the outlines of the burial plots shown on Figure 2, was right against the eastern edge of burial plot 9. This indicates that either the real eastern edge of burial plot 9 was actually further east, or that the western edge of burial plot 8 was slightly further west, which would suggest that shaft grave 68 was actually within burial plot 8, which was recorded to have contained three burials.
- 5.2.7 The burial records list four of the five individuals interred within plot 9 as members of the Wilkins family. A memorial stone commemorating these four, Wilkins family presently stands upright against the southern end of the west wall of the chapel (Figure 2). It is likely that this had originally been an above ground, recumbent ledger stone overlying one of the shaft graves revealed within the test pit.
- 5.2.8 Three earth-cut graves were revealed within test pit 7, and coffins were reached in two of them. The schedule of burials records four burials within this plot. Either

another grave was cut, outside the confines of the test pit, or one of the graves contained more than one burial. On the other hand, it is possible that the burial schedule is wrong. It is worth noting that the burial records state that T. Cleorlyn died aged 5, which may correspond with the child's coffin revealed within grave 85.

- 5.2.9 Two stone-lined shaft graves were revealed in test pit 3. Whilst human bone was visible at the base of shaft grave 102, the number of individuals represented could not be ascertained. It is possible that just one individual was present. A child's coffin was observed within shaft grave 106. The schedule indicates that two individuals, an adult, and an individual of unspecified age, were interred within burial plot 3. Whilst each shaft grave may well have held just single individuals, shaft graves are more often than not intended for multiple, family burials. It is certainly possible that more individuals were interred within these shaft graves, but not entered in the records or perhaps the churchyard had ceased in use, prior to any subsequent interments.
- 5.2.10 In one of the shaft graves within test pit 3, an upended coffin was observed. The significance of this is unclear, but it was either the result of the collapse of one of the metal bars, or partial decay of one end of the coffin, causing it to tip up on end, or it was placed this way deliberately. This has been observed among other non-conformist burials, for example Kingston-upon-Thames, London (Cox 1998), but the reason is unclear. It may relate to the notion that being buried upright, facing east (as the Zion Chapel coffin appeared to be) would allow the interred individual to be facing Jesus on the Day of Judgement.

#### *Coffins and coffin fittings*

- 5.2.11 The remains of a number of coffins were observed during the excavations. Coffin 66 was wooden, and completely surrounded by metal plating, probably tin. There appeared to be no coffin fittings, however. The coffin within shaft grave 68, from the limited view into the shaft, appeared to be of wood-metal-wood construction. Iron grips, grip plates, a breast plate and lid motif were also visible. The edge of a coffin was visible in earth cut grave 83, and this was also of wood-metal-wood construction (probably zinc). No fittings were observed on this coffin, although only the very top edge was revealed. In grave 85, fragments of wood and iron grips and grip plate fragments indicated the presence of a coffin, and in shaft grave 106, a well preserved wooden coffin with an iron grip and grip plate were observed. No detail of the remains of the coffin/s in the base of shaft grave 102 could be observed.
- 5.2.12 The types of coffins from Zion Chapel, in particular a wooden coffin with a metal shell, and wood-metal-wood coffins, are consistent with contemporary examples seen among the middle-classes. The presence of shaft graves is also typical of middle-class burial activity. This is interesting, given the largely working class character of the majority of Baptists at this time. At the Baptist burial ground at Broad Street, Kings Lynn, with the exception of one triple layered coffin, all were single-thickness wood coffins, with very few coffin fittings (Boston, forthcoming). No shaft graves were present at Kings Lynn (*ibid.*). At the Baptist burial ground at West Butts Street, Poole, all coffins were of wood, with little ornamentation (McKinley 2008, 47).

- 5.2.13 Whilst coffin fittings were evident at Zion Chapel, upholstery studs were notably absent. As stated in Section 1.3.10, the exteriors of coffins of this period were commonly upholstered and decorated with elaborate stud work.
- 5.2.14 The absence of stud work at Zion Chapel does not seem to fit with the evidence for otherwise middle-class burials. In addition, whilst the decorative detail of most of the coffin fittings could not be observed, the grip plate of the coffin in shaft grave 106 had a simple decoration. At least one coffin (66), whilst apparently tin-plated, had no coffin fittings at all. These findings therefore suggest that the individuals associated with Zion Chapel, despite clearly being able to afford elaborate coffins and graves, observed the Baptists' theological emphasis on eschewing worldly values and possessions in pursuit of more spiritual goals. This practice is also reflected in the lack of decorative fittings at Broad Street, Kings Lynn and West Butt Street, Poole (Boston forthcoming; McKinley 2008, 47).

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 The evaluation, comprising six 1.5m sq test pits, has revealed that earth-cut graves, and brick and stone-lined shaft graves, as well as other structural remains, are present within the area of proposed development.
- 6.1.2 The structural deposits that were revealed include a dry-stone culvert, the original north churchyard boundary wall, two brick shaft graves and two stone-lined shaft graves, all within a depth of 1m.
- 6.1.3 Actual burials revealed within a depth of 1m below ground level included two coffins, which were reached within two earth-cut graves (test pit 7), and a coffin which was present at the top of a brick shaft grave in test pit 9.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Test pit</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick./depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>
<b>18</b>							
	01	Layer	1.50 +	1.50 +	0.20	Modern topsoil and turf	
	02	Fill	1.08 +	0.56 +	0.40	Upper fill of grave cut 04	Pot
	03	Fill	1.20 +	0.48 +	0.40 +	Lower fill of grave cut 04	
	04	Cut	1.20 +	0.56 +	0.80 +	Grave cut	
	05	Fill	1.24 +	0.35	0.50	Upper fill of grave cut 07	Pot
	06	Fill	1.24 +	0.23	0.30 +	Lower fill of grave cut 07	Pot
	07	Cut	1.24 +	0.35	0.80 +	Grave cut	
	08	Fill	0.74 +	0.70 +	0.60	Upper fill of grave cut 10	Pot
	09	Fill	0.84 +	0.62 +	0.20 +	Lower fill of grave cut 10	
	10	Cut	0.84 +	0.70 +	0.80 +	Grave cut	
	11	Layer	1.26 +	0.86 +	0.46 +	Natural	
	12	Fill	?	1.00 +	0.35	Upper fill of ?pit 14	Pot
	13	Fill	?	0.85 +	0.30	Lower fill of ?pit 14	Pot
	14	Cut	?	1.00 +	0.65 +	Possible pit cut	
<b>14</b>							
	20	Cut	1.42 +	0.43 +	0.70	Possible pit cut	
	21	Fill	1.42 +	0.43 +	0.70	Fill of possible pit 20	Pot, animal bone, CBM
	22	Cut	0.98 +	1.25 +	0.62	Pit cut	
	23	Fill	0.98 +	1.25 +	0.62	Fill of pit 22	Pot, animal bone, CBM, glass, CTP, Fe nails and heel shoe
	24	Layer	1.50 +	1.50 +	0.80 +	Worked/garden soil layer	Pot, animal bone, CBM, oyster shell, Fe nails
	25	Layer	1.50 +	1.50 +	0.20	Modern topsoil and turf	

12							
	40	Layer	1.50 +	1.50 +	0.20	Modern topsoil and turf	
	41	Layer	1.24 +	1.36 +	0.18	Possible surface	
	42	Layer	1.50 +	1.37 +	0.22	Worked/garden soil layer	Pot, CBM
	43	Fill	1.84 +	0.85	0.45	Backfill of construction cut for culvert 44	Pot, CBM
	44	Structure	1.84 +	0.63	0.30	Stone culvert	
	45	Cut	1.84 +	0.85	0.45	Construction cut for culvert 44	
	46	Layer	1.50 +	1.38 +	0.20	Worked/garden soil layer	Pot, CBM, CTP
	47	Layer	0.12 +	0.44 +	0.18	Worked/garden soil layer	Pot
	48	Layer	0.13 +	0.44 +	0.10 +	Natural	
	49	Structure	1.50 +	0.13 +	0.6	Original churchyard boundary wall	
	50	Fill	1.50 +	0.12 +	0.6	Backfill of construction cut for wall 49	CTP
	51	Cut	1.50 +	0.20 +	0.6	Construction cut for wall 49	
9							
	60	Layer	1.50 +	1.50 +	0.20	Modern topsoil and turf	
	61	Layer	1.50 +	1.50 +	0.20	Churchyard soil	Pot
	62	Layer	1.50 +	1.50 +	0.40 +	Worked/garden soil layer	Pot, CBM
	63	Fill	0.88 +	1.04	0.27	Upper fill of construction cut 67; soil surrounding and between ledger stones	
	64	Structure	0.68 +	0.80	1.20 +	Brick shaft grave	
	65	Fill	0.60 +	0.56	0.20 +	Soil within shaft grave 64	
	66	Coffin	?	0.40	0.30	Coffin within shaft grave 64	
	67	Cut	0.90 +	1.10	1.20 +	Construction cut for shaft grave 64	
	68	Structure	0.52 +	1.00	1.40	Brick shaft grave	
	69	Cut	0.60 +	1.00 +	1.60 +	Construction cut for shaft grave 68	
	70	Fill	0.60 +	1.00 +	1.60 +	Backfill of construction cut 69	

7							
	80	Layer	1.50 +	1.50 +	0.20	Modern topsoil and turf	
	81	Layer	1.50 +	1.50 +	0.12	Churchyard soil	
	82	Layer	1.50 +	1.50 +	0.60 +	Worked/garden soil layer	Pot, CBM, animal bone, glass, CTP
	83	Cut	1.18 +	0.22 +	0.68 +	Grave cut	
	84	Fill	1.18 +	0.22 +	0.68 +	Fill of grave cut 83	
	85	Cut	0.50 +	0.52	0.80 +	Grave cut	
	86	Fill	0.50 +	0.52	0.80 +	Fill of grave cut 85	Animal bone
	87	Cut	1.24 +	0.23 +	0.80 +	Grave cut	
	88	Fill	0.65 +	0.12 +	0.82 +	Fill of grave cut 87	
3							
	100	Layer	1.50 +	1.50 +	0.18	Modern topsoil and turf	
	101	Fill	1.50 +	0.70 +	0.30 +	Backfill of construction cut 103	
	102	Structure	1.50 +	0.85	1.40	Stone-lined shaft grave	
	103	Cut	1.50 +	1.00	1.60 +	Construction cut for shaft grave 102	
	104	Layer	1.50 +	1.50 +	0.20	Churchyard soil	
	105	Fill	1.50 +	0.54 +	0.20 +	Backfill of construction cut 107	
	106	Structure	1.50 +	1.00	1.80	Stone-lined shaft grave	
	107	Cut	1.50 +	1.00	2.00 +	Construction cut for shaft grave 106	
	108	Layer	1.50 +	0.40 +	0.20 +	Worked/garden soil layer	Pot, CBM

+ = Full extent not revealed within test pit

CBM = Ceramic building material

CTP = Clay tobacco pipe

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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### APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** Zion Baptist Chapel, Calne, Wiltshire

**Site code:** CAZION08

**Grid reference:** SU009717

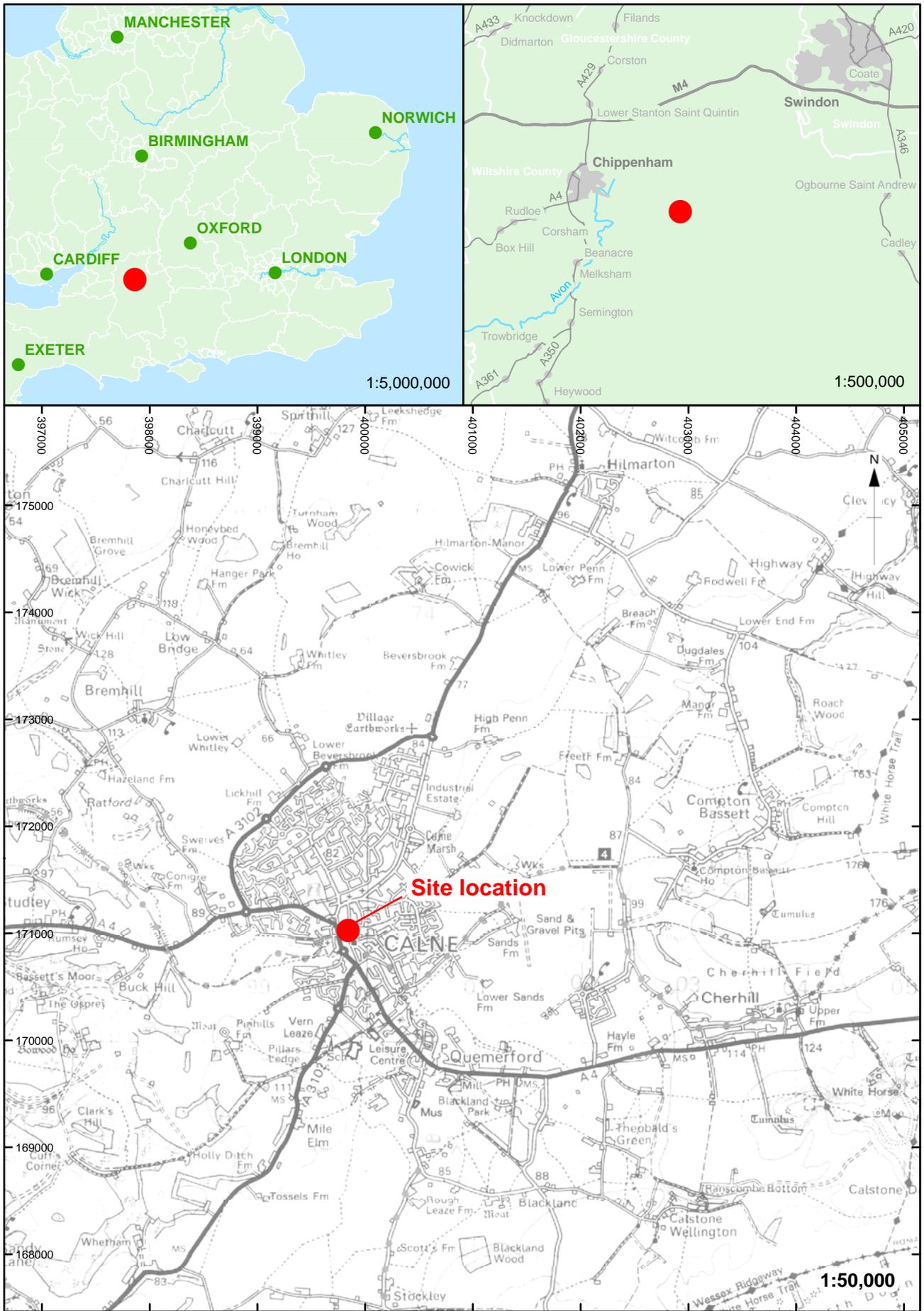
**Type of evaluation:** Six 1.5m<sup>2</sup> test pits within churchyard associated with Zion Chapel

**Date and duration of project:** November 2008, 4 days

**Area of site:** c. 325m<sup>2</sup>

**Summary of results:** The evaluation revealed a number of post-medieval features, including six earth-cut graves, two brick shaft graves and two stone-lined shaft graves, as well as a dry-stone culvert, part of the original north churchyard boundary wall and three possible refuse pit cuts.

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Wiltshire Heritage Museum in due course, under the following accession number: (to be confirmed)



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Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Location of the test pits and the original 19th century land and burial plot boundaries

### Test Pit, Plot 18 Plan

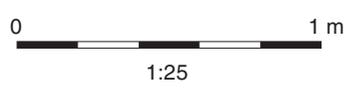
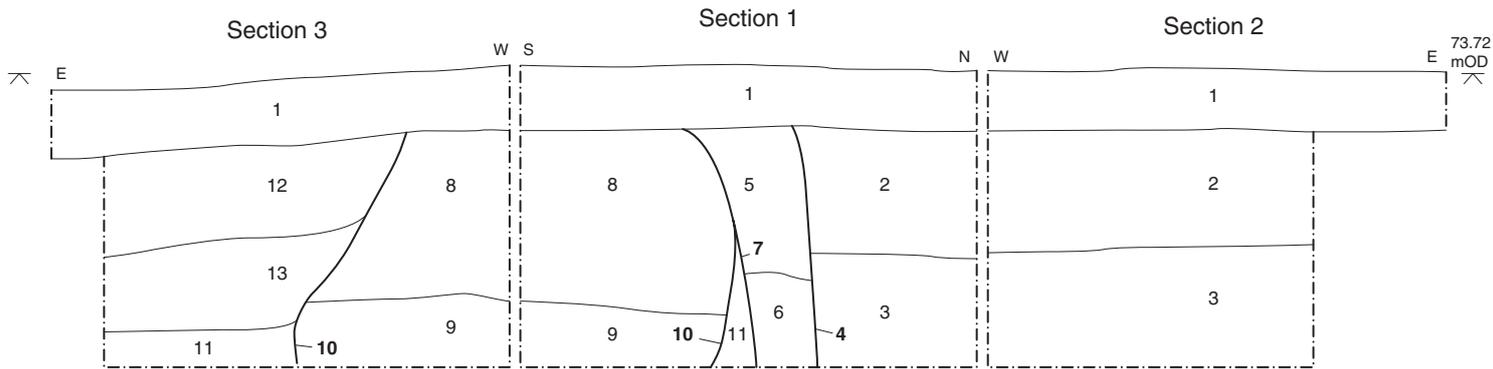
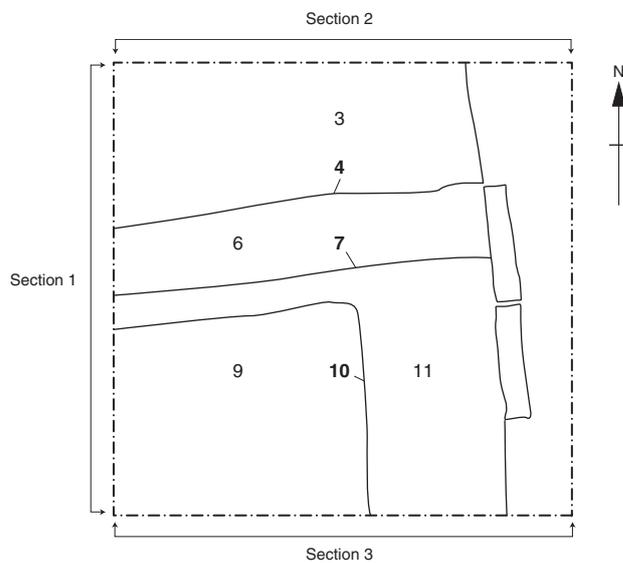


Figure 3: Plan and sections of test pit within burial plot 18

### Test Pit, Plot 14 Plan

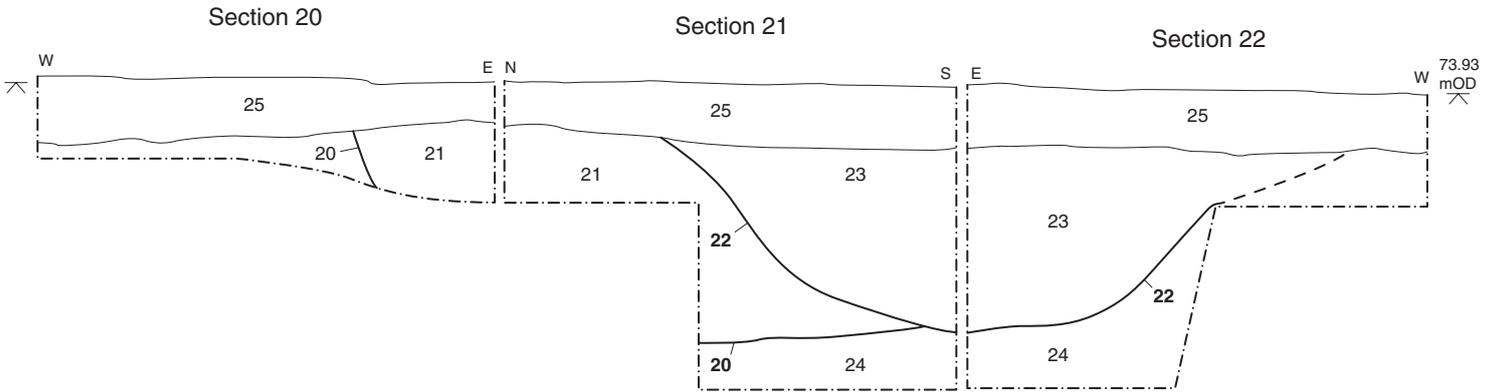
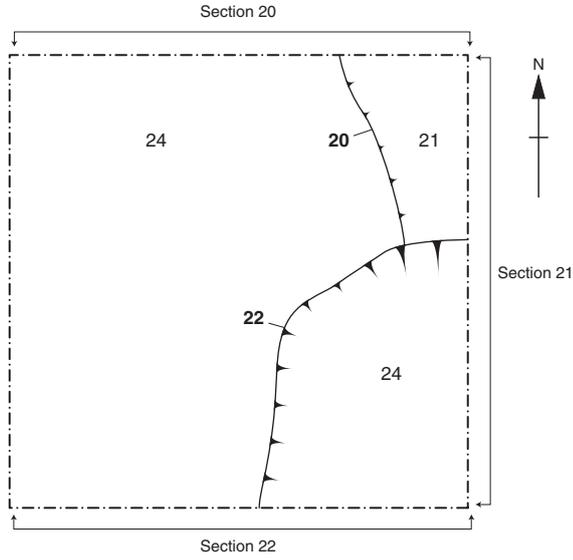


Figure 4: Plan and sections of test pit within burial plot 14

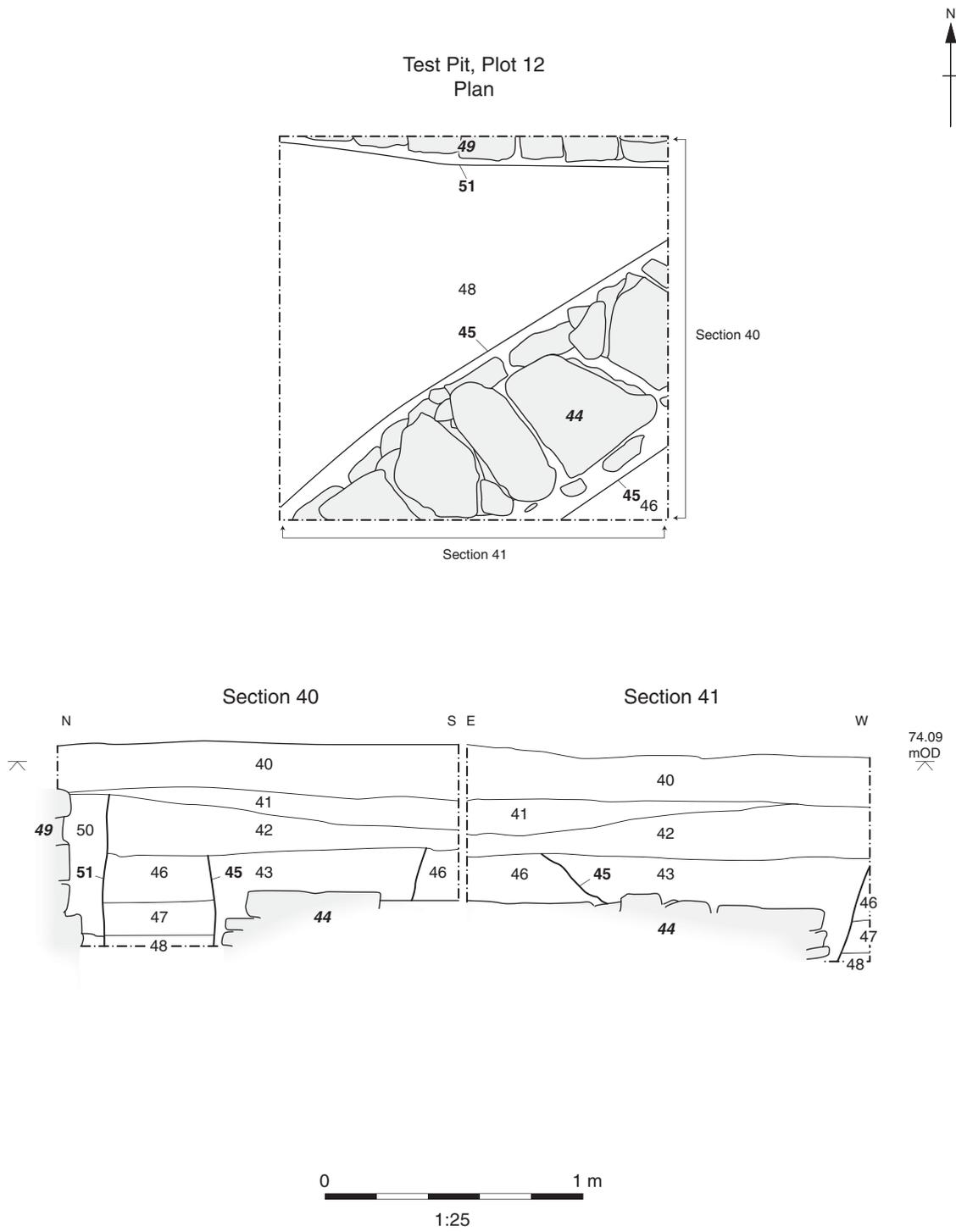


Figure 5: Plan and sections of test pit within burial plot 12

### Test Pit, Plot 9 Plan

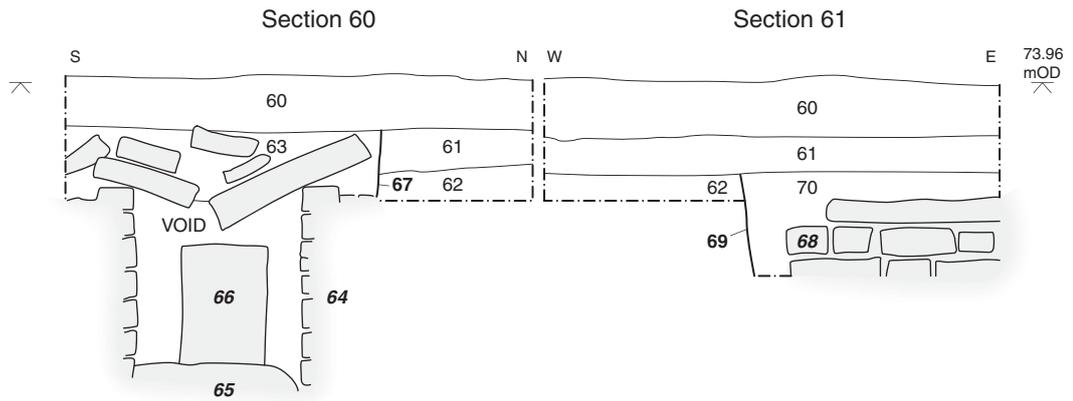
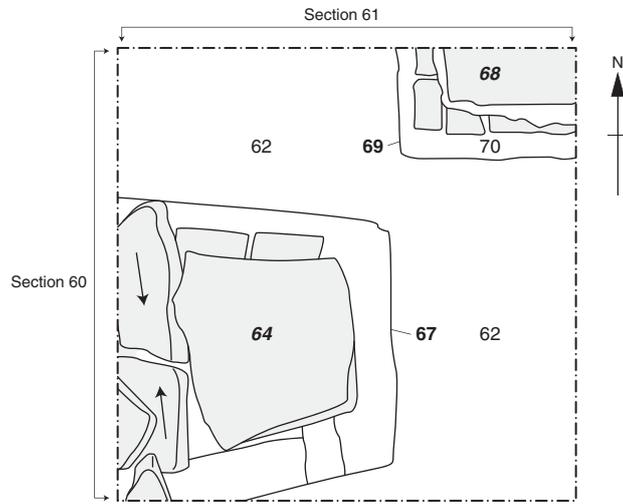


Figure 6: Plan and sections of test pit within burial plot 9

### Test Pit, Plot 7 Plan

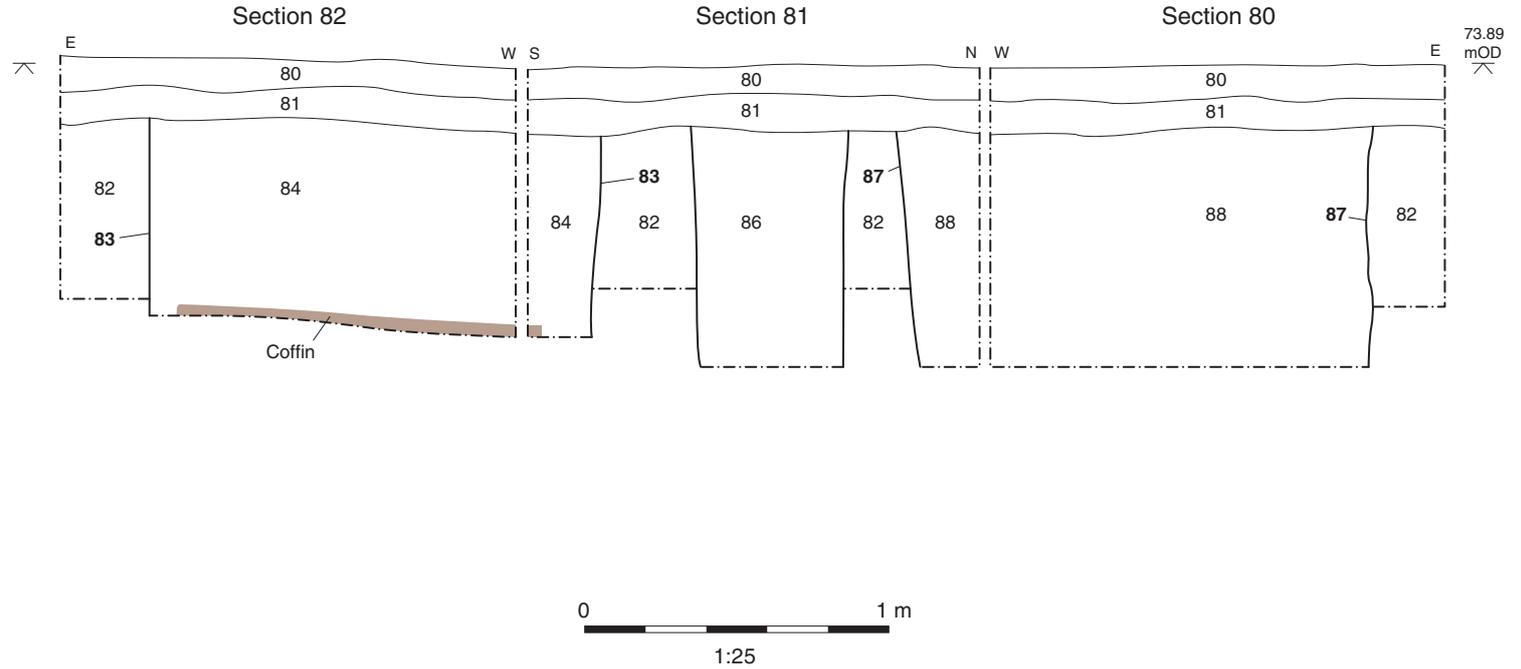
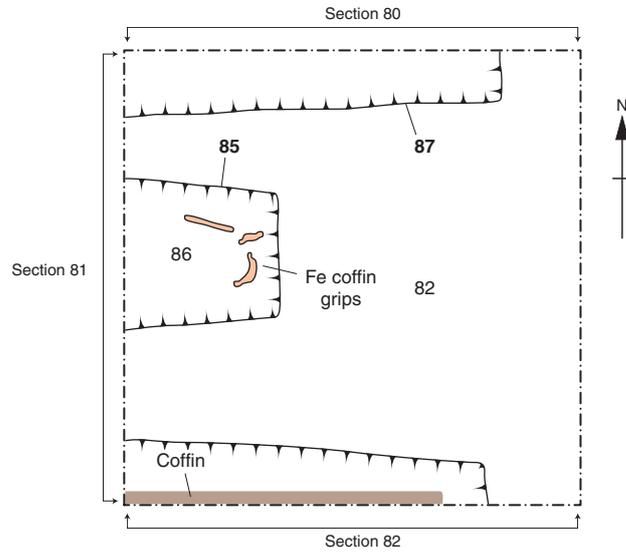


Figure 7: Plan and sections of test pit within burial plot 7

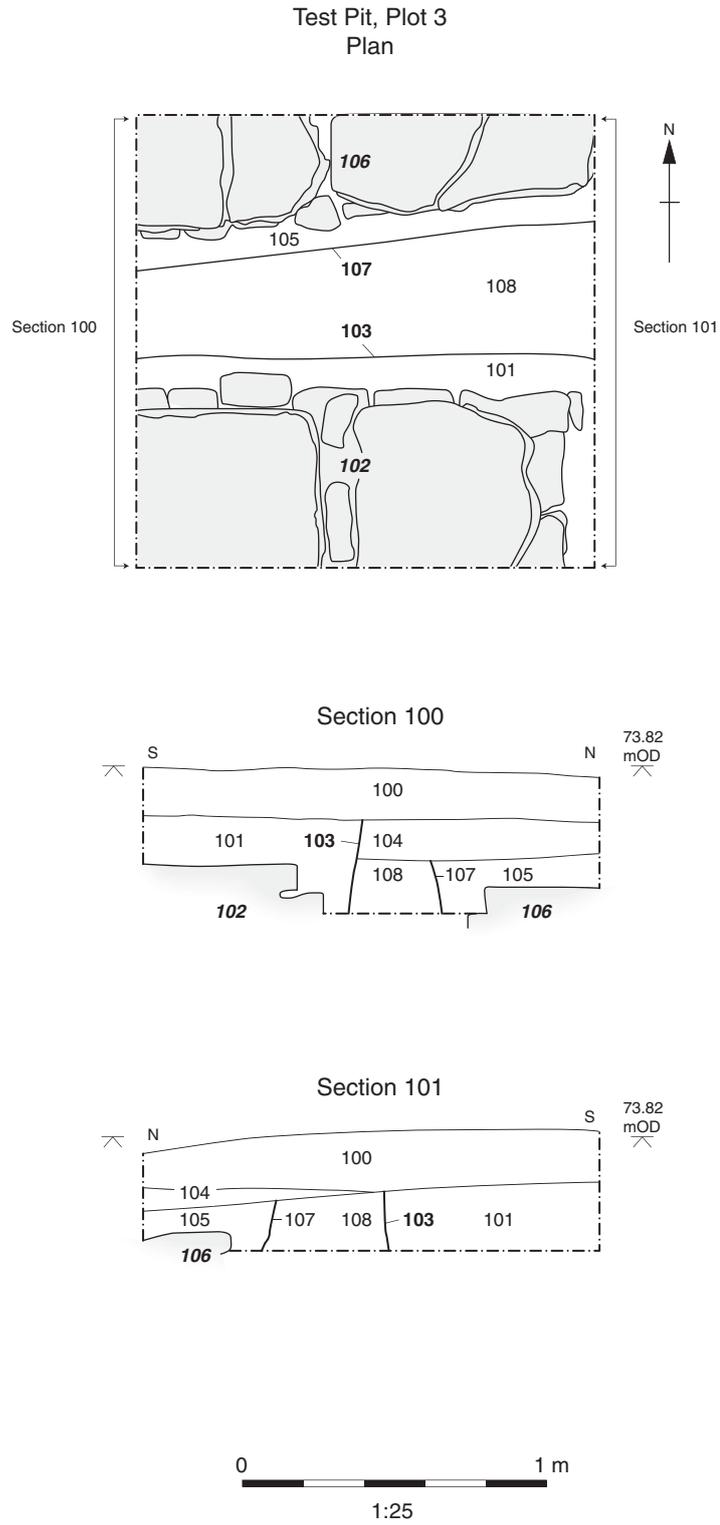


Figure 8: Plan and sections of test pit within burial plot 3

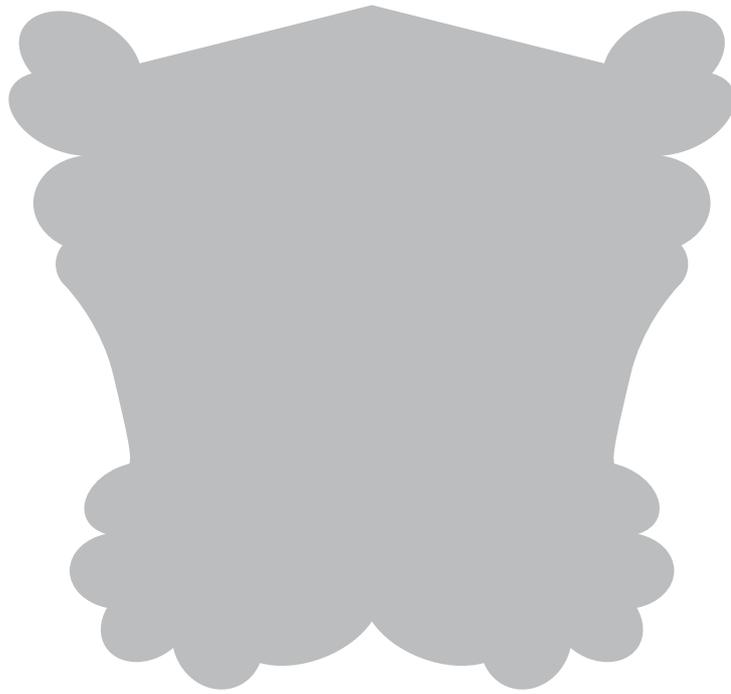


Figure 9: Outline of breast plate from within brick shaft grave 68 (not to scale, detail not visible).  
New type: CAZION01

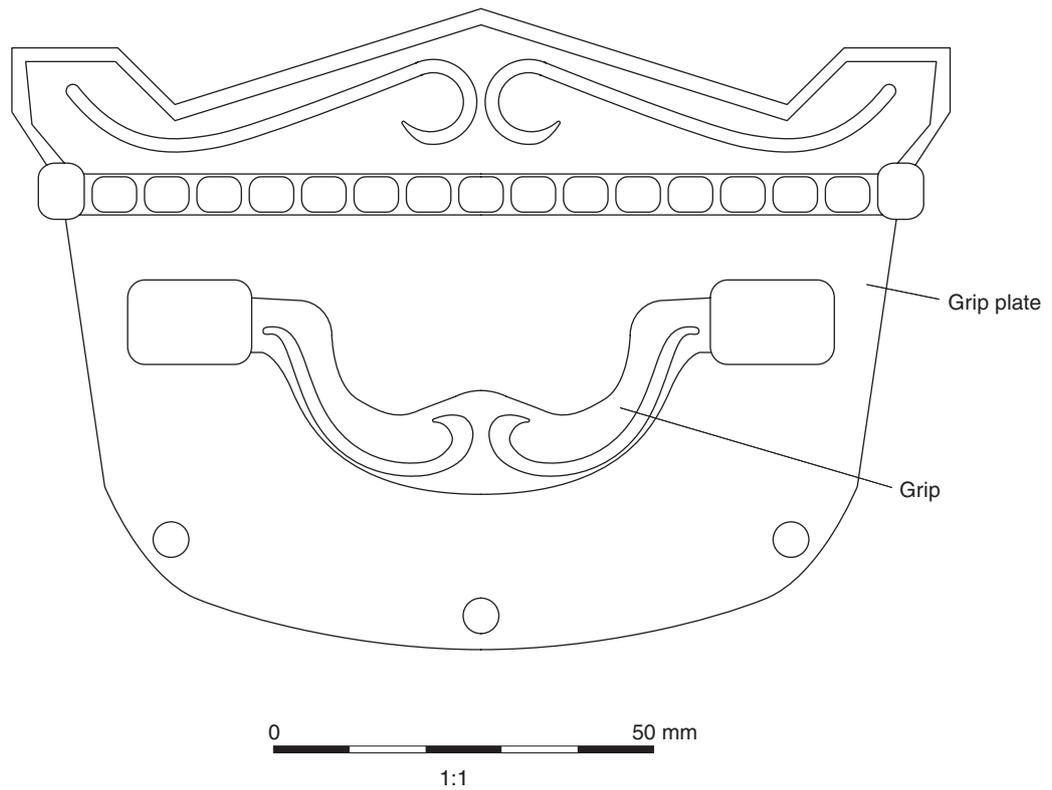


Figure 10: Grip and grip plate from child's coffin within stone-lined shaft grave 106.  
New types: Grip plate CAZION01, Grip CAZION01